



# Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning

*Planning for the Challenges Ahead*



**Amy J. Bodek, AICP**  
Director of Regional Planning

**Dennis Slavin**  
Chief Deputy Director,  
Regional Planning

July 15, 2021

TO: Stephen J. Sass, Chair  
Benjamin J. Kahle, Commissioner  
Yolanda Duarte–White, Commissioner  
Mark F. Lucas, Commissioner  
Edward R. Bosley, Commissioner  
Historical Landmarks and Records Commission

FROM: Bruce Durbin, Supervising Regional Planner  
Department of Regional Planning

**JULY 23, 2021 HLRC MEETING**  
**PROJECT NO. 2019-002209-(5), CASE NO. RPPL2019003965**  
**HISTORIC HIGHLANDS HISTORIC DISTRICT NOMINATION**

This item is a recommendation to nominate a portion of the Historic Highlands neighborhood, located in the unincorporated community of Altadena, as a County of Los Angeles (County) Historic District.

To facilitate the nomination of the unincorporated portion of the Historic Highlands neighborhood as a County Historic District, on May 1, 2019, Robert Bullock, Co-Chair of the Historic Highlands Neighborhood Association's Altadena Landmark Districting Committee, submitted a written request for fee relief for the nomination application. The Department of Regional Planning (DRP) recommends that the Historical Records and Landmarks Commission (Commission) nominate the neighborhood as a County Historic District, as there is no application fee associated with a Commission nomination nor applicant expense related to the required contributor survey.

Attached are the draft resolution for the proposed County Historic District and nomination, and evaluation with district boundary map prepared by DRP's consulting architectural historian, ASM Affiliates.

DRP staff recommends the following motion for the Commission's consideration:

*The Historical Landmarks and Records Commission hereby:*

- *Finds the project categorically exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act; and*
- *Adopts a resolution nominating a portion of the Historic Highlands neighborhood, located in the unincorporated community of Altadena, as a County of Los Angeles Historic District.*

If you have any questions, please contact Dean Edwards, Ordinance Studies Section, at [dedwards@planning.lacounty.gov](mailto:dedwards@planning.lacounty.gov)

BD:DE:ems

Attachments:

- A. Draft Resolution
- B. ASM Affiliates Evaluation Memo, dated July 12, 2019
- C. Public Correspondence

**RESOLUTION**  
**COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES**  
**HISTORICAL LANDMARKS AND RECORDS COMMISSION**  
**HISTORIC HIGHLANDS HISTORIC DISTRICT NOMINATION**  
**PROJECT NO. 2019-002209-(5)**  
**CASE NO. RPPL2019003965**

**WHEREAS**, the Historical Landmarks and Records Commission (hereinafter, “the Commission”) of the County of Los Angeles (hereinafter, the County) has conducted a duly noticed public hearing on July 23, 2021, in the matter of Project No. 2019-002209-(5)), to nominate a portion of the Historic Highlands neighborhood located in the unincorporated community of Altadena as a County Historic District pursuant to Chapter 22.124 of the Los Angeles County Code (hereinafter, the County Code); and

**WHEREAS**, the Commission finds as follows:

1. The boundary of the proposed historic district (“district”) encompasses the following 72 parcels and includes the adjacent parkway strips: 5849019008, 5849017023, 5849019014, 5849019031, 5849020007, 5849016013, 5849018004, 5849018011, 5849019001, 5849019016, 5849016014, 5849019011, 5849018002, 5849015021, 5849014002, 5849018005, 5849018003, 5849001002, 5849016018, 5848037020, 5849001001, 5849019006, 5849018001, 5849016001, 5848037006, 5849019012, 5849002004, 5849019015, 5849016007, 5849018010, 5849002002, 5849018017, 5849019005, 5849002001, 5849020028, 5849018015, 5848037007, 5849019035, 5849018018, 5849001003, 5850001001, 5850001004, 5848037021, 5849018006, 5848037005, 5849020006, 5849015018, 5849018009, 5849014001, 5849020008, 5849018008, 5849019013, 5849002003, 5849017020, 5849016005, 5849016002, 5849018012, 5849019002, 5850001003, 5849020009, 5849016021, 5849019007, 5849019021, 5849019037, 5849018019, 5849020025, 5850001002, 5849019036, 5849019033, 5849015019, 5850001015 and 5849016009.
2. To facilitate the nomination of the unincorporated portion of the Historic Highlands neighborhood as a County Historic District, on the May 1, 2019, Mr. Robert Bullock, Co-Chair of the Historic Highlands Neighborhood Association’s Altadena Landmark Districting Committee, submitted a written request for fee relief for the nomination application. Since there is no fee waiver program, the Department of Regional Planning (DRP) recommended that the Commission nominate the neighborhood as a County Historic District, as there is no application fee associated with a Commission nomination nor applicant expense related to the required contributor survey.
3. Pursuant to County Code Section 22.124.080, the Commission may by resolution nominate a historic district. Such resolution shall be in writing and include findings of fact in support of the nomination, including reasons why the district is eligible for, and deserving of, designation under the criteria set forth in Section 22.124.070 (Criteria for Designation of Landmarks and Historic Districts). The nomination shall be effective as of the date the resolution is adopted.
4. The district is eligible for and deserving of designation because:
  - a. The following designation criteria has been met pursuant to County Code Section 22.124.070.D:
    - i. More than 50 percent of property owners in district consent to the designation. 52% of the owners have consented to the designation.

- ii. The structures are 50 years of age or older. The primary structures located on contributing properties to the district were constructed from 1905 to 1959 and are of 62 to 116 years old;
  - iii. The district is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of history in the County and the community of Altadena. The area exemplifies the process of the subdivision of orange groves into a bustling suburb during the economic boom of the 1920s;
  - iv. The district embodies distinctive characteristics of the following architectural styles: Craftsman, Spanish Colonial Revival, Tudor, Colonial Revival, Neoclassical, Mission Revival, Renaissance Revival, Minimal Traditional and Ranch; and
  - v. The district exhibits a concentration of historic properties containing common character-defining features, which contribute to each other and are unified aesthetically by significant geographical patterns, particularly the boundaries of the original Pasadena Highlands Tract.
- b. The district has maintained sufficient integrity to convey its historical significance with 78% (56) of its properties contributing to the district.
  - c. The historical integrity of the district is threatened by demolition. On June 2, 2021, the Department of Regional Planning was informed that a contributor with a high degree of historic integrity in the district was in escrow and proposed demolition.
  - d. On January 22, 2008, the City of Pasadena designated the adjacent Pasadena portion of the neighborhood as the Historic Highlands Landmark District. Designating a portion of the neighborhood located in Altadena will contribute to preservation of the neighborhood and its historical cohesiveness.
- 5. On July 12, 2019, consulting Architectural Historians, ASM Affiliates submitted an evaluation of the of the district that included recommended district boundaries that follow National Park Service guidance.
  - 6. On January 11, 2020, DRP hosted a well-attended community meeting about historic districts at the Eaton Canyon Nature Center in nearby Pasadena. Owners of property located within the district were notified by mail of the meeting.
  - 7. On February 14, 2020, DRP mailed a letter to the property owners of the district informing them of the nomination effort and requesting that they complete a form indicating designation consent.
  - 8. As a courtesy, the property owners, Altadena Heritage, Altadena Town Council, and Los Angeles Conservancy were notified by mail of this public hearing.
  - 9. To date, one letter of opposition from a property owner was received.
  - 10. The project is categorically exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), pursuant to section 15331 (Historical Resource Restoration/Rehabilitation–Class 31) of CEQA.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT,** the Historical Landmarks and Records Commission:

1. Find that the project is categorically exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), pursuant to section 15331 (Historical Resource Restoration/Rehabilitation–Class 31) of CEQA; and
2. Adopt a resolution nominating a portion of the Historic Highlands neighborhood located in the unincorporated community of Altadena, as a County of Los Angeles Historic District.

DRAFT

I hereby certify that the foregoing Resolution was adopted by a majority of the voting members of the Commission of the County of Los Angeles on July 23, 2021.

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Chair Stephen Sass  
Historical Landmarks and Records Commission  
County of Los Angeles

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

RODRIGO CASTRO-SILVA  
County Counsel

By \_\_\_\_\_  
Deputy County Counsel  
Property Division

VOTES

Yes:

No:

Abstain:

Absent:

July 12, 2019

Dean Edwards  
Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning  
320 West Temple Street, Room 1346  
Los Angeles, California 90012

**Peer Review of the Proposed Altadena Highlands Historic District, Altadena, California**

Dear Mr. Edwards:

This memo provides the results of a review of the historic district application materials submitted for the Altadena Highlands Historic District in the Altadena community of Los Angeles County (County).

**Introduction**

In 2015, the County enacted a Historic Preservation Ordinance establishing a County Register of Landmarks and Historic Districts with the intention of recording and maintaining an inventory of County historical resources, with nominations to be reviewed by a Landmarks Commission and approved by the Board of Supervisors (Ord. 2015-0033 § 3, 2015). Accordingly, ASM Affiliates, Inc. (ASM) prepared this memo to document our peer review of the materials submitted to register the Altadena Highlands Historic District, consisting of 45 properties with 36 contributors, in the community of Altadena, County of Los Angeles, California. Included in this memo are methodology, summary of the history of the district, County landmark criteria, and findings of our review.

**Methodology**

ASM architectural historians Shannon Davis, Marilyn Novell, Laura Taylor Kung, and Lisa DeMarais conducted a reconnaissance-level survey of the 45 properties for the proposed historic district and larger surrounding neighborhood on July 2, 2019. ASM also reviewed the nomination and documentation associated with the Historic Highlands Landmark District in Pasadena as they share a common history and development. No additional research was conducted by ASM, and this review is based solely on the site visit and the information provided in the landmark application for the district.

**Summary of Altadena Highlands History**

Historic Highlands began at the turn of the century (1900) and came of age during World War I and the economic boom of the 1920s. From orange groves in the early twentieth century, the area grew into a country outpost and eventually to the bustling and varied neighborhood of today. What is known today as the Historic Highlands encompasses the estates and land holdings of two prominent Pasadena / Altadena pioneers: Ezra Dane, an orchardist who settled here in 1883, and David J. Macpherson, former Santa Fe Railroad design engineer of the famed Mount Lowe Railway. Ezra Dane moved his family to what is now the Pasadena area in 1883 where he purchased 160 acres. Dane oversaw orchard and livestock operations on his land, which stretched north from Washington to Woodbury Road and east from Holliston to a midway point between modern day Mar Vista and Catalina. As Pasadena grew north and east, the Danes began in 1912 to subdivide and sell off their lots to Pasadena's prosperous business and professional class. Macpherson owned much of the land bordered by New York Drive on the north and Washington Boulevard on the south, in what is now the western part of the neighborhood. The east/west streets were given names of the railroads: Atchison, Topeka, and Erie (now Woodbury), while the names Catalina and Mar Vista acknowledge the great view of the ocean at the time. Macpherson teamed with famous entrepreneur Thaddeus Lowe to design and build the Echo Mountain Incline Railway which made its first official trip on July 4, 1893. Macpherson was living at 1120 Atchison Street at the time of his death.

### **Criteria for Evaluation**

The County of Los Angeles Landmark Criteria are outlined in the Historic Preservation Ordinance. These criteria closely parallel guidelines established by the National Park Service and the California Office of Preservation for determination of eligibility for listing in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) and the California Register of Historical Resources (CRHR), respectively. In addition, the seven aspects of integrity, as defined by the NRHP (National Park Service 1998), are applied to ensure that the property is able to convey its historical significance. County of Los Angeles Landmark Criteria and National Park Service integrity guidelines are described in this section.

### ***County of Los Angeles Landmark Criteria***

Criteria for Designation of Landmarks and Historic Districts (Chapter 22.124 of the Los Angeles County Code of Ordinances (referred to herein as the Historic Preservation Ordinance) are as follows:

- A. A structure, site, object, tree, landscape, or natural land feature may be designated as a landmark if it is 50 years of age or older and satisfies one or more of the following criteria:
  - 1. It is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of the history of the nation, State, County, or community in which it is located;
  - 2. It is associated with the lives of persons who are significant in the history of the nation, State, County, or community in which it is located;
  - 3. It embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, architectural style, period, or method of construction, or represents the work of an architect, designer, engineer, or builder whose work is of significance to the nation, State, County, or community in which it is located; or possesses artistic values of significance to the nation, State, County, or community in which it is located;
  - 4. It has yielded, or may be likely to yield, significant and important information regarding the prehistory or history of the nation, State, County, or community in which it is located;
  - 5. It is listed, or has been formally determined eligible by the United States National Park Service for listing, in the National Register of Historic Places, or is listed, or has been formally determined eligible by the State Historical Resources Commission for listing, on the California Register of Historical Resources;
  - 6. If it is a tree, it is one of the largest or oldest trees of the species located in the County; or
  - 7. If it is a tree, landscape, or other natural land feature, it has historical significance due to an association with an historic event, person, site, street, or structure, or because it is a defining or significant outstanding feature of a neighborhood.
- B. Property less than 50 years of age may be designated as a landmark if it meets one or more of the criteria set forth in Subsection A, above, and exhibits exceptional importance.
- C. The interior space of a property, or other space held open to the general public, including but not limited to a lobby, may be designated as a landmark or included in the landmark designation of a property if the space qualifies for designation as a landmark under Subsection A or B. above.
- D. Historic districts. A geographic area, including a noncontiguous grouping of related properties, may be designated as an historic district if all of the following requirements are met:



1. More than 50 percent of owners in the proposed district consent to the designation;
2. The proposed district satisfies one or more of the criteria set forth in Subsections A.1 through A.5, above; and
3. The proposed district exhibits either a concentration of historic, scenic, or sites containing common character-defining features, which contribute to each other and are unified aesthetically by plan, physical development, or architectural quality; or significant geographical patterns, associated with different eras of settlement and growth, particular transportation modes, or distinctive examples of parks or community planning.

### ***Historical Integrity***

Integrity is the ability of a property to convey its significance. The National Park Service publication, *How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation* (National Park Service 1997a), establishes how to evaluate the integrity of a property. The evaluation of integrity must be grounded in an understanding of a property's physical features and how they relate to the concept of integrity. Determining which of these aspects is most important to a property requires knowing why, where, and when a property is significant. To retain historic integrity, a property must possess several, and usually most, aspects of integrity:

1. **Location** is the place where the historic property was constructed or the place where the historic event occurred.
2. **Design** is the combination of elements that create the form, plan, space, structure, and style of a property.
3. **Setting** is the physical environment of a historic property and refers to the character of the site and the relationship to surrounding features and open space. Setting often refers to the basic physical conditions under which a property was built and the functions it was intended to serve. These features can be either natural or manmade, including vegetation, paths, fences, and relationships between other features or open space.
4. **Materials** are the physical elements that were combined or deposited during a particular period or time, and in a particular pattern or configuration to form a historic property.
5. **Workmanship** is the physical evidence of crafts of a particular culture or people during any given period of history or prehistory and can be applied to the property as a whole, or to individual components.
6. **Feeling** is a property's expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time. It results from the presence of physical features that, when taken together, convey the property's historic character.
7. **Association** is the direct link between the important historic event or person and a historic property (National Park Service 1997a:44-45).

### ***Guidelines for Selecting Boundaries***

The National Park Service publication, *How to Complete the National Register Registration Form* (National Park Service 1997b), discusses the selection of boundaries for historic properties and districts. It suggests that boundaries should encompass the single area of land containing the significant concentration of buildings, sites, structures, or objects making up the district. The district's significance and historic integrity should help determine the boundaries. In determining boundaries, it is important to consider the following factors:

1. Visual barriers that mark a change in the historic character of the area or that break the continuity of the district, such as new construction, highways, or development of a different character.

2. Visual changes in the character of the area due to different architectural styles, types or periods, or to a decline in the concentration of contributing resources.
3. Boundaries at a specific time in history, such as the original city limits or the legally recorded boundaries of a housing subdivision, estate, or ranch.
4. Clearly differentiated patterns of historical development, such as commercial versus residential or industrial.

### **Finding of Review**

Based on the information provided, our site visit, and review of the parallel designated historic district in Pasadena, ASM recommends that the Altadena Highlands Historic District is historically significant, and eligible for local designation. In accordance with the nomination, ASM concurs that the district is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of history in Los Angeles County, and specifically, Altadena. The area exemplifies the process of the subdivision of orange groves into a bustling suburb during the economic boom of the 1920s. Two Pasadena pioneers originally owned the land and began to subdivide it into parcels sold to the area's professional class who built custom homes on the large lots. Many lots were further divided in more recent years and the arrangement of parcels within the blocks of the tract reflect this development.

ASM also concurs that the district embodies distinctive characteristics of several architectural styles. The proposed district contains excellent examples of Craftsman, Spanish Colonial Revival, Tudor, Colonial Revival, Neoclassical, Mission Revival, Renaissance Revival, Minimal Traditional, and Ranch style homes that further reflect the significance of the architectural development of the neighborhood. Furthermore, ASM concurs that the proposed district exhibits a concentration of historic properties containing common character-defining features, which contribute to each other and are unified aesthetically by significant geographical patterns, particularly the boundaries of the original Pasadena Highlands Tract.

ASM considered whether the district retains integrity to the proposed period of significance (1905-1959). Although research was not conducted, it is believed that most houses were not moved and as such retain integrity of location. Most changes to the setting have occurred due to the growth of trees which has become an important element of the developed neighborhood. Most of the homes retain their integrity of design, materials, and workmanship with multiple examples original doors, windows, and architectural details. Finally, the district retains high integrity of feeling and association, a collection of Craftsman and period revival styles that reflect the development of the historic neighborhood. As the majority of properties retain all seven aspects of integrity in varying degree, the district as a whole retains overall integrity. It appears that contributors and non-contributors were determined primarily through the period of significance with two exceptions, 1121 Atchison Street which was constructed in 1940, and 1715 Mar Vista Avenue which was built in 1933. ASM concurs that alterations to those properties, such as the replacement of original windows, diminishes the integrity of these properties to the point that they are no longer contributors to the potential historic district.

Much of the significance of this historic district is based on its inclusion in the Pasadena Highlands Tract. ASM conducted a reconnaissance-level survey to determine whether the proposed boundaries were sufficient given that the original tract had an eastern boundary of Hill Avenue, a western boundary of Lake Avenue and a northern boundary of New York Street (Figure 1). The proposed eastern boundary is Mar Vista Avenue, including parcels on both the west and east sides of the street. During the reconnaissance survey, ASM observed that the properties on Woodbury Road and Lexington Street to the east of Mar Vista Avenue are smaller in scale and have a different character with fewer character-defining features of their respective styles. Additionally, there were several properties that would be considered non-contributors due

to a loss of integrity, in some cases equaling nearly 50% of the block. Therefore, ASM concurs that the eastern boundary along Mar Vista Avenue is justified as it marks a change in character. Similarly, the block of Woodbury Road to the west of the western boundary of Catalina Avenue contains a majority of non-contributors that justify not extending the boundary all the way to Lake Avenue.

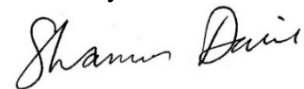
However, the historic character and scale exemplified by the proposed historic district continues along the south side of New York Street from the third parcel east of Lake Avenue across the northern line of the historic Pasadena Highlands tract to the eastern boundary of Hill Avenue. This includes the five parcels excluded from the original proposed district. The National Park Service guidelines recommend that boundaries are best determined using previously established borders such as sub-divisions or tracts. A boundary that corresponds with the tract is the most defensible boundary should someone claim it was arbitrarily determined without consideration of integrity or historic borders. For this reason, ASM also recommends the property at 1790 Catalina Avenue be included as part of the historic district. With these expanded boundaries the historic district would contain approximately 72 developed properties with 60 properties considered contributing.

Although the applicant requests eligibility under local Criteria A.1, A.2, and A.3, ASM recommends that it is only eligible under A.1 and A.3. The argument made for Criterion A.2 applies to the early Pasadena pioneers Ezra Dane and David Macpherson. Although these pioneers are locally significant individuals, they are not closely associated with the history of any particular house or with the physical development of this district. The one exception would be 1120 Atchison Street where Macpherson was living when he died, but his association with this house is not strong enough to justify the district's eligibility under A.2 (although that property could be *individually* eligible under this criterion). As property owners and developers, the significance of Dane and Macpherson would be better argued under Criterion A.1 as they contributed to the pattern of development.

It is also recommended that the period of significance be reconsidered to be consistent with the dates established by the associated Pasadena Historic Highlands district which ends in 1959. No justification is given for the 1950 end date and several potential contributors are excluded due to this date choice. Unless there is an event related to the history of the development of the tract that occurred in 1950 to justify the end of the period of significance at that date, it is preferable to justify an end date by being consistent with the established historic district in Pasadena.

Please contact me as needed, if you have questions or would like clarification.

Sincerely,



Shannon Davis  
Director, Architectural Historian  
ASM Affiliates, Inc.  
20 North Raymond Avenue, Suite 220  
Pasadena, California 91103  
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## References

National Park Service, National Register of Historic Places

1997a *How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*. NRHP Bulletin No. 15. Washington, D.C.

1997b *How to Complete the National Register Registration Form*. NRHP Bulletin No. 16. Washington, D.C.

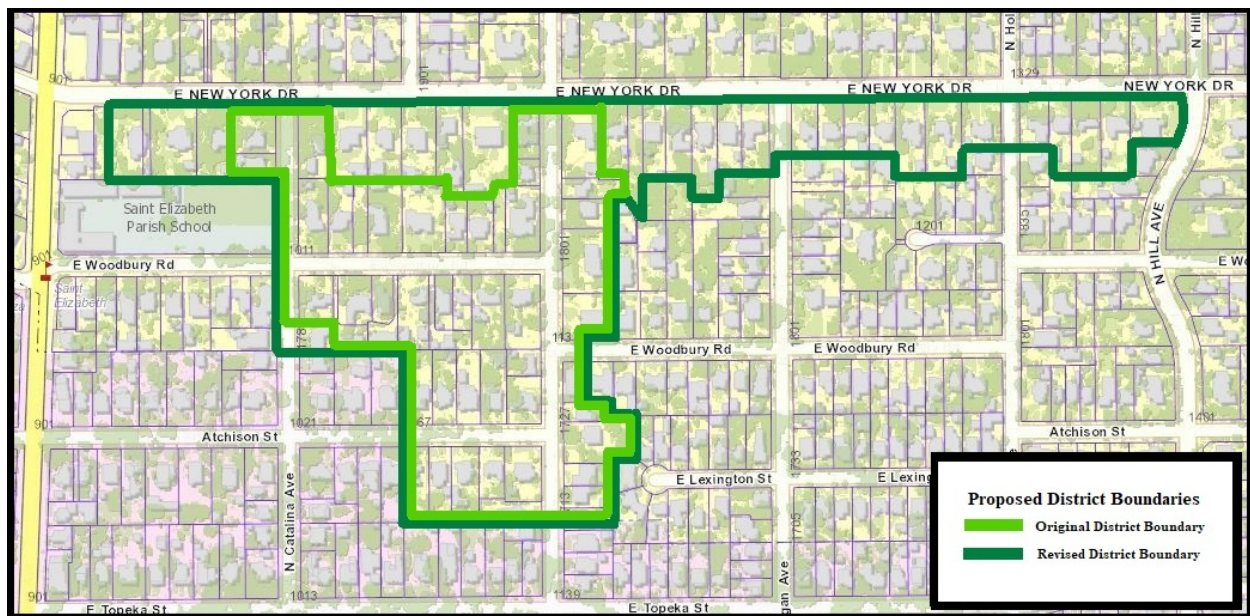


Figure 1: Altadena Highlands Historic District Map

**From:** [bruce@brsilver.com](mailto:bruce@brsilver.com)  
**To:** [Dean Edwards](#)  
**Subject:** Re project 2019-002209-5  
**Date:** Saturday, July 3, 2021 10:22:19 AM

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**CAUTION: External Email. Proceed Responsibly.**

Dear Mr Edwards

I am writing re the proposal to make our neighborhood a "Historic District". Frankly I am surprised this is still alive, as there was a questionnaire a year or two ago about it and everyone I know voted No. I believe the initiative for this started when a modern house on Woodbury was built a few years ago and some neighbor did not like the design. Too bad. Frankly, it is still the nicest house on the block. I am curious, what was the result of your survey on this question?

While most buildings in the district are around 85 years old, there is no common style. You have big houses next to tiny ones, Mediterranean, Craftsman, mid-century ranch and all manner of houses jumbled together. There are nice houses and, frankly, shacks next to each other. Imposing some bureaucrat's "style guide" to home improvements seems a bad idea.

The encumbrances on homeowners in the district are hard to justify, as there is no apparent benefit to them. Also this is a diverse community, in both and income, and for that reason your proposed rules on improvements would be considered racist by many.

I am opposed to the proposal, and I hope you will discard it once and for all.

Bruce Silver  
1216 New York Drive  
Altadena CA 91001